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LETTERS

RELATING TO THE STATE OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
WITH RESPECT TO THE ROMAN CHURCH
BOTH IN HER DOCTRINE AND
PRACTICE.

BY DR. BRETT.

Published with a Preface

BY THOMAS BOWDLER, M.A.



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PREFACE.

THE following Letters were printed a few years since, from Manuscripts in the Editor's possession, on account of a revival of the charge of Romanism, against the Non Jurors of the last century; whose whole history, together with the recorded sentiments of some of the greatest note among them, should put to silence such an accusation. It is frequently repeated, however, by those who have no means of knowing better, or, having them, do not use them; nor need we wonder, if that which remains uncontradicted be received as true. Hence the importance of showing the real sentiments of some of the learned and pious men who joined that communion; how they sought, like our Reformers, to trace the stream to the fountain head, and to be primitive in doctrine, discipline, and worship. This was the stronghold, wherein they entrenched themselves, maintaining that all which could not be traced to the first three centuries, whether Popish or Puritanical, was false and erroneous. The opinions of learned, pious, self-denying men, upon points

with which they were conversant, are very valuable.

In again putting forth these Letters, the Editor has a somewhat different, or rather a further intention. The late unhappy decision of the Judicial Council (*lenitas verbi tristitiam rei mitigat*) has filled the hearts and minds of many with doubt and fear; doubt, as to their present position; and fearful anticipation of greater ills to come. And the “*media via*,” in which they are exhorted to continue, appears to them no longer “*via tuta*,” feeling that it is an uncomfortable thing to walk arm-in-arm with the Romanist and the Zuinglian, and not knowing who may join them. It is not an over-anxious foreboding, which apprehends that when a free latitudinarianism is admitted now, a short time will suffice to bring in Arianism among us. And these thoughts and fears will be strengthened by rumours in various quarters of a discouragement (to say the least) of dogmatic teaching, and inculcating distinctive doctrines in our schools; and of a spirit of unbelief pervading large classes of our people. The objections of Dissenters, which were thought to be fast wearing out, are revived by their finding, or thinking that they find, ours to be a State religion, and a Church which is dependent upon an Act of Parliament for its doctrines; nay, in which is so much of fiction; not to use the coarser language which has been applied in a high quarter.

Now, where there is much of sinking of heart, and

looking abroad for help in difficulties, and a refuge for troubled minds, it may be useful to lay down one sound principle, as a rule and guide. Such a principle is affirmed in these letters; namely, that we must not break communion with our Church, *unless she impose unlawful terms of communion*. This it was, which was so strongly upon the minds of the Non Jurors, that even in the day of weakness and decay, when discussing anxiously the nature of their position, and the course which they should adopt, they never turned their eyes towards Rome. For ourselves, it will be strange indeed, if we look to that quarter, as one in which we may breathe freely, and walk at liberty. Some persons, peradventure, think to indulge their opinions within her borders, and choose what tenets they will hold and what refuse; they will not have Mariolatry, for instance, nor Purgatory. What! join the communion of a Church, and subject yourselves to an anathema at the moment of union! So long as the decrees of the Council of Trent are maintained, and the additions made to the Nicene, or more strictly the Constantinopolitan Creed, enjoined as articles of faith, unlawful terms of communion are enforced; and he who would keep his faith and loyalty must reject them.

It is not so with us, thanks be to God! It is not yet forbidden us to inculcate the doctrines which we have learned from our fathers in Christ. We are bound to use the formularies of our Church. Let us continue to do so; and explain them according to

their natural and literal meaning. No sophistry will induce a plain and honest mind to receive them in a sense which they will not bear.

Let the most united effort be made to deliver us from the bondage of State government in which we are held, and to obtain a competent tribunal to judge between truth and error.

But a door is opened, as we have said, for worse evils to enter. Yes: and it may be added, that the interval may be more brief than many of us may imagine, between admitting unsound doctrine, and enforcing it; and in what predicament do we stand, having this danger full in view? Nay; the greater the peril, the stronger the reason for no one deserting his post; the more urgent the need of every exertion being made to prevent or repel it. Filial affection—it is no figure of speech, for the Church is our true mother, who has borne us to Christ—the reverent dutiful affection of children will never suffer them to sever themselves from her side, till her whole nature be changed towards them; which can only be when she shall renounce her allegiance to her Lord. And this can never be, while from thousands of congregations at home and abroad is going up the voice of united supplication, binding all in a holy band of communion with one another, with their common Mother, and the God and Father of them all.

They who contemplate a separation from the Church at home, must consider in what relation they will stand to the congregations which are settled

abroad under bishops and pastors sent from hence. The life and health and vigour which has enabled our Vine to put forth so many true plants in foreign lands, as well as to multiply congregations at home, with a daily or weekly service and celebration of the Holy Communion continually increasing, forms surely a most powerful argument for waiting patiently, devoutly, thankfully, hopefully, upon God.

But another word must yet be spoken, and with much solemnity. Have not our sins, our supineness, our worldly-mindedness, brought God's judgment upon us? May not our divine Advocate, while making confession for us, say with Moses, "Oh this people have sinned a great sin, and made them gods of gold"? Has not our Establishment been our idol? Is the wealth, the enormous wealth, of this country bestowed in any due proportion by the members of the Church, with some splendid exceptions, upon promoting the glory of God, and the spreading of the Gospel of His dear Son? If this be so, we may take a lesson from the self-denying conduct of the writer of these letters and his brethren, who counted all things but loss that they might follow Christ and the truth.

The Editor may be pardoned if over-earnestness has led him beyond the limits which he had prescribed to himself; and which will only allow him to add, that he has not omitted the last letter in this little series, though not immediately connected with those which precede it, because it may be interesting

to some persons to know the sentiments of the writer upon a subject which had so deeply engaged his attention—it shows his constant regard to primitive rule and practice, and the preference which he gave to the Greek and Eastern Liturgies above the Roman.

T. B.

LETTERS OF DR. BRETT,

ſc. ſc.

Springgrove, August $\frac{18}{29}$, 1733.

To John Cotton, Esq.

With regard to the Bishop of Senec's book you say,—“ The main doctrine of the Jansenists, “ and which they have hitherto confirmed by their “ practice, is, that the Church cannot erre, though there “ may be errors in the Church, and that those errors “ spread far and wide, yet they can never excuse “ breaking off from the Communion of the Church; and “ they may join in the Communion without partaking “ in those errors. They assert that even a formal Ex- “ communication from the Church of Rome can neither “ cut them off from the body of that Church, nor justify “ their setting up separate communions, and that even “ should that case happen, they would still go to their “ Churches.” You add, “ If they can prove this doctrine “ right, we certainly have done wrong in our Reforma- “ tion; for though we were in the right in renouncing “ the errors of the Church of Rome, yet, according to “ their principles, we acted with too much warmth, “ since we neither would receive at their altars, if they “ would admit us, nor admit any of their communion “ to receive at ours if they would offer it.”

munion with him on that account. And though Stephen proceeded so far as to excommunicate St. Cyprian, and treated his legates rudely, and in a most unchristian manner, yet St. Cyprian declared himself always ready to communicate with Stephen, and those that adhered to him. And though St. Cyprian is supposed to have been wrong in the matter contested, yet his conduct and practise on this occasion has been universally commended, and that of Stephen has been condemned. And, therefore, I would not join with a Roman priest in any religious worship here in England, where they act in opposition to the Established Church, and thereby make their worship (were it otherwise inoffensive) schismatical; yet if I was at Rome, or in any other country of that communion, I should make no scruple of conscience to join with them, even at the altar, if their form of worship obliged me not to partake in their errors.

The Divines of the Church of England, in their controversies with the Dissenters, have laid it down a maxim, not to be denied,—that nothing can justify separation from a National or Provincial Church but unlawfull terms of communion: And that, although a Church maintain gross errors, yet, if she make not those errors terms of communion, her holding them will not justify separation from her: And have acknowledged that the errors of the Church of Rome were not sufficient to justify us in not communicating with her, if she did not make them terms of communion;—so that we cannot communicate with her but we must partake in her errors. And, I question whether any Divine of the Church of England (who has considered the point) will say otherwise. And, when objections have been made against any of the Articles, or any

doctrine taught in the Homilies, and urged as an argument against communicating with the Church of England,—answer has been made, that, supposing that Article or doctrine could not be defended, this might be a reason why a man might refuse to take Orders in the Church of England; because then he would be obliged to subscribe the Articles and Homilies, but can be no reason why he should not communicate with that Church as a Layman, who is not obliged to any such subscription. I would, therefore, acknowledge this doctrine and practise of the Jansenists to be very right; and would act as they do, if I thought a man could communicate with the Church of Rome without partaking in her errors. And I persuade myself that the most considerable Divines of the Church of England have been, and are, of that opinion.

But, as I have said before, we cannot join in any part of divine worship with the Church of Rome without partaking in her errors; for in all the Offices of that Church there are prayers to saints departed. Now, admitting these prayers were no other than some of our English Romanists pretend, that is, petitions to the saints to pray for us in like manner as I may ask yours or any good Christian's prayers (though the words of the prayers plainly imply much more), yet to make such addresses to dead men is certainly a very great error. For if they suppose the saints can hear their prayers at all times and in all places (and if they do not 'tis highly absurd to pray to them), they give to dead men an incommunicable attribute of God, and must believe them to be omnipresent. And is it not a species of idolatry to make Gods of dead men? If they shall say (as I think they do) that the saints, being in the highest heaven, see all things *in Speculo*

Trinitatis, this is *gratis dictum*, of which there is no proof from Scripture or antiquity. Nay, it may be proved from Scripture and antiquity that the saints are not yet admitted to the highest heaven, and to what we call the Beatifick Vision; and, therefore, the primitive Church prayed for the Virgin Mary, and other the greatest saints, as believing them yet to be in an imperfect state and place of happiness. Now we cannot communicate with the Church of Rome without partaking in this error. If it should be said that we may forbear to join in these prayers without saying Amen to them, I answer, that while a man is present in the Church, and behaves himself outwardly as others do who join in all the other parts of the worship there performed, he, by that behaviour, appears to join in those prayers, as well as others, and, consequently, partakes in those errors,—so far as to induce others to believe he joins in those prayers to saints, as well as in those to God Almighty,—and thereby lays such a stumbling-block in the way of others, as is expressly forbidden in Holy Scripture. And if he should rise from his knees at those prayers, and by that or other open signs declare his dissent to them, he would disturb the Congregation: neither, as I believe, would such a practise be suffered. He would soon be called upon and examined concerning his faith; and if he denied any additional articles of the Roman Creed, he might suffer severely for it.

Again, how can a man communicate with the Church of Rome, in the Holy Eucharist, without partaking in the error of that Church concerning communion in one kind. He who is satisfied to receive the bread, or body of Christ, only, without the cup, or blood, must partake in that error of the Church of Rome which teaches,—*That under one kind only, whole*

and entire Christ and a true Sacrament is taken and received. He must partake in that error of the Council of Constance, which declared,—**Licet Christus post cœnam instituerit, et suis discipulis administraverit sub utrâque specie panis et vini hoc venerabile Sacramentum, tamen, hoc non obstante, non debet confici post cœnam, nec recipi, nisi à jejunis; et similiter, quod licet in Primitivâ Ecclesiâ Sacramenta reciperentur sub utrâque specie à fidelibus, tamen hæc consuetudo, ut à Laicis sub specie panis suscipiatur, habenda est pro lege quam non licet reprobare. Et asserere hoc esse illicitum, censi debet erroneum: et pertinaciter asserentes sunt arcendi tanquam Heretici.* Here is a *non-obstante* put to the institution of Christ, and to the practice of the primitive Church—the best comment to direct us how that institution is to be observed; and yet, not to submit to this decree is declared heretical. Surely this is an error of a very high nature. And can a man submit to this, and be contented to receive the Holy Eucharist in the species of bread only, and not partake in the error? These two instances, to omit others, are sufficient to show that we cannot communicate with the Church of Rome without partaking in her errors.

But although we cannot join with the Romanists in their worship without partaking in their errors, because they have introduced their errors into all their religious offices, yet a Romanist may safely join with us in our worship, because there is nothing in our Liturgy which even a Romanist can say is erroneous. And Mr. Collier tells us, in his Ecclesiastical History, (vol. 2, p. 436), *that, for the first ten years of Queen Elizabeth, they came frequently to our Church.* From whence it also appears that, from the beginning of our Reformation, we refused not to admit them to our

* Although Christ instituted and administered this venerable Sacrament to his disciples after Supper, under both kinds of bread & wine, yet, notwithstanding this, it ought not to be celebrated after Supper, nor to be received but by those who are fasting: so in like manner—although in the primitive Church the Sacraments were received under both kinds by the faithful: yet, this custom of Laymen receiving only under the kind of bread is to be held as a law, which it is not lawful to reject. And to assert that this is unlawful, must be held erroneous: and those that pertinaciously assert it are to be driven away as Hæreticks.

altars, if they would offer it. So that our Church proceeded not with that warmth you suppose her to have done. And Bishop Bramhall, in his vindication of himself and the Episcopal Clergy from the Presbyterian charge of Popery, (p. 140), tells us, *that Father Paul Harrois, (a Romanist violent enough,) has often said to him, that if we had retained the Liturgy used in Edward the Sixth's time, he would not have forbore to have come to our Communion.* He made no question of our readiness to admit him to communion, if he would have come; nor does the Bishop give any intimation that he would have refused him, though he knew him to be a Romanist violent enough. This shows that our Church does not want the charity St. Paul recommends, and, I think, comes not a whit behind the Jansenists in the exercise of that virtue, but exceeds them; because she does not confine her charity to one Church—the Church of Rome—as they do, but is ready to act in the same manner towards the Greek, and all other Christian Churches. I will conclude this long epistle with the words of Bishop Bramhall, in his forementioned book (p. 101). *It was not the erroneous opinions of the Church of Rome, but the obtruding them by law upon the other Churches, that warranted a separation. He who will have no communion with a Church which has different or erroneous opinions in it, so long as they are not obtruded, must provide a ladder to climb up to heaven by himself.*



Springgrove, September $\frac{1}{2}\frac{5}{6}$, 1733.

Since I have been obliged to trouble you upon this occasion, I will add something to my former letter, to show that the Church of England has not receded from the communion of the Church of Rome, but only from her errors. Which I shall do in the words of Bishop Bramhall, taken from his book called *A Replication to the Bishop of Chalcedon, his Survey of the Vindication of the Church of England from criminous Schism*, (p. 18, &c.,) printed 1656. His words are :—

“ For all ancient Churches, Grecian, Armenian, Ethiopian, &c., none are excluded, not the Roman itself; we are so far from forsaking them, that we make the Scriptures interpreted by their joint belief and practice to be the rule of our Reformation. And wherein their successors have not swerved from the example of their predecessors, we maintain a strict communion with them. Only in rites and ceremonies, and such indifferent things, we use the liberty of a free Church, to choose out such as are proper for ourselves, and most conducive to those ends for which they were first instituted, that is, to be advancements of order, modesty, decency, gravity in the service of God, to be adjuncts to attention and devotion, furtherances of edification, helps of memory, exercises of faith, the leaves that preserve the fruit, the shell that preserves the kernel of religion from contempt. And all this with due moderation, so as neither to render religion sordid and sottish, nor yet light and garish, but comely and venerable. Lastly, for Communion in Sacraments, we have forsaken no Sacra-



“ ments instituted by Christ, or received by the primitive
 “ Christians. We refuse no Communion with any Catho-
 “ lick Christians at this day, and particularly with those
 “ ancient Churches he mentions, though we may be and
 “ have been misrepresented one to another ; yea, though
 “ the Sacraments may be administered, not without
 “ manifest imperfections, whilst sinful duties are not
 “ obtruded upon us as conditions of Communion. Under
 “ this caution we still retain Communion in Sacraments
 “ with Roman Catholicks. If any person be baptized
 “ or admitted into holy orders in their Church, we baptize
 “ them not ; we ordain them not again. Wherein then
 “ have we forsaken the Church of Rome in Sacraments ?
 “ Not in the ancient communion of genuine Sacra-
 “ ments, but in their septenary number and suppo-
 “ sititious Sacraments, which yet we retain for the most
 “ part as usefull and religious rites, but not under the
 “ notion of Sacraments. Not in their Sacraments, but
 “ in their abuses and sinfull injunctions in the use of
 “ the Sacraments. As their administration of them in
 “ a tongue unknown, where the people cannot say
 “ Amen to the prayers and thanksgivings of the
 “ Church, contrary to St. Paul. As their detaining the
 “ cup from the Laity, contrary to the institution of
 “ Christ, Drink ye all of this, that is, not all the
 “ Apostles only, for the Apostles did not consecrate
 “ in the presence of Christ, and, as to the participation
 “ of the Sacrament at that time, were but in the con-
 “ dition of Laymen. As their injunction to all the com-
 “ municants to adore not only Christ in the use of the
 “ Sacrament, to which we readily assent, but to adore the
 “ Sacrament itself. And, lastly, as their double matter
 “ and form in the Ordination of a Priest, never known in
 “ the Church for above a thousand years. These, and

“such like abuses, were the only things which we did
 “forsake: so as I may truly say, *Non Tellus Cymbam*
 “*sed Terram Cymba reliquit.* It was not we that did
 “forsake them in the Communion of their Sacrament,
 “but it was their Sacraments did forsake us: And yet
 “we do not censure them for these innovations in the
 “use of the Sacraments, or the like, nor thrust them
 “out of the Communion of the Catholick Church, but
 “provide for ourselves, advise them as brethren, and
 “so leave them to stand or fall to their own master.
 “So, on our parts, there is a Reformation but no
 “Separation.

A little after (Page 31), the Bishop says, “No
 “Church under Heaven is really more free from just
 “suspicion of schism than the Church of England, as
 “not censuring nor excluding uncharitably from her
 “communion any true Church which retains the
 “essentials of Christian religion.” Again (Pages 57,
 58) he says “In co-ordinate Churches, whereof one is
 “not subordinate to another, some Churches reforming
 “themselves, and not censuring or condemning others
 “which are unreformed, whilst they preserve their
 “duty entire to the Œcumenical Church, and its
 “representative—a General Council—do not separate
 “themselves from other Churches, but their own errors.
 “If they will needs construe our lawful Reformation
 “to be an unlawful separation, how can we help it?
 “We have separated from no Eastern, Western,
 “Northern, or Southern Church. Our Article tells
 “them the same. Either let them produce some act
 “of ours which makes or implies such a separation, or
 “let them hold their peace for ever.”

The Article which the Bishop refers to is the 30th
 Canon of the year 1603, which says, “So far was it

“ from the purpose of the Church of England to for-
 “ sake and reject the Churches of Italy, France, Spain,
 “ Germany, or any such like Churches, in all things
 “ which they held and practised, that as the Apology of
 “ the Church of England confesseth, it doth with
 “ reverence retain those ceremonies which do neither
 “ endamage the Church of God, nor offend the minds
 “ of sober men. And *only departed from them in those*
 “ *particular points, wherein they were fallen both from*
 “ *themselves in their ancient integrity, and from the*
 “ *Apostolical Churches, which were their first founders.*”
 Indeed, as Bishop Bramhall says before, In Rites and
 Ceremonies, and such indifferent things, we use the
 liberty of a free Church. And this our Church also
 declares, in the Preface to the Common Prayer, at the
 conclusion of the title of *Ceremonies*:—“ In these our
 “ doings we condemn no other nation, nor prescribe
 “ any thing but to our own people only ; we think it
 “ convenient that every country should use such
 “ ceremonies as they shall think best, to the setting
 “ forth of God’s honour and glory, and to the reducing
 “ the people to a most perfect and godly living, without
 “ errors and superstition ; and that they should put
 “ away other things which, from time to time, they
 “ perceive to be most abused, as in man’s ordinances
 “ often chanceth in diverse countries.”

If, therefore, the Church of England has been right
 in renouncing the errors of the Church of Rome (as
 you grant, and what, I think, the Jansenists upon
 their principles should allow), she has not been wrong
 in her Reformation. For she has only used the liberty
 belonging to every national Church, that is, to reform
 her own offices of Divine Worship, and to cast out
 the corruption and errors that had gradually crept

into them, and has not pretended to impose any thing on other Churches; nor does she refuse communion with them,—only so far as not to communicate in their errors. The Hugonots, indeed, and other Calvinists, have set up a new Church. For St. Cyprian, in his Epistle to Florentius Pupianus (Epist. 66, edit. Oxon. 69, edit. Pamel.), defines a Church to be **Plebs sacerdoti adunata, Pastori suo grex adhærens*. And the doctrine and practise of the Catholick Church, for 1500 years, shows that none were ever owned and acknowledged for Priests and Pastors but such as derived their succession from Christ and his Apostles by Episcopal ordination. The consequence of which is, that those who set up other Priests or Pastors, who have no such succession, erect a new Church, different from that established by Christ and his Apostles. Such new Pastors, the Bishop of *Senes*, in his book (Page 6), proves, from the Calvinists' own confession, they have set up. I have a book of all their Articles and Canons, made in their Synods, and published in English, by one Quick, a Presbyterian teacher, in the year 1692; where I find they pay no regard to the ordinations in the Church of Rome. For in their synod at Orleans, A. D. 1562, they decree, that “If a Bishop or Curate
 “desire to be promoted unto the ministry of the
 “Gospel, they may not be received until such time as
 “they are first admitted members of the Church,
 “renouncing all their benefices, and other rights
 “depending on the Church of Rome; professing also
 “publicly repentance for their past sins, as they shall
 “be ordered by the Consistory; and, after long tryal
 “and proof had of their repentance and godly conver-
 “sation, they may be chosen into the ministry of the
 “Gospel, according to the canons of our Church dis-

* A People
 united to a
 Priest, a Flock
 adhering to its
 Pastor.

“cipline.” And in their synod of Gap, 1603, “The
 “question being moved—Whether, in treating of the
 “call of our first Pastors and Reformers, if it were
 “expedient that we should lay the stress of that autho-
 “rity for preaching and reforming, upon that call and
 “ordination they had in the Church of Rome,—or no ;
 “the synod doth judge that we ought, according to
 “the one and thirtieth Article, to found it principally
 “upon their extraordinary vocation, whereby they
 “were, by an inward powerful impulse from God, raised
 “up and commanded to exercise their ministry, rather
 “than to charge it upon the sorry relicks of a corrupted
 “call and ordination in the Romish Church.” This is
 not the reforming the errors of the Church of Rome,
 but directly setting up a new Church. But the Church
 of England has not done so. She receives the ordina-
 tions made in the Church of Rome, and derives her
 own ordinations from thence. But plainly rejects the
 ordinations of the Calvinists, declaring, in the Preface
 to her Ordinal, that “No man shall be accounted or
 “taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in the
 “Church of England, or suffered to execute any of the
 “said functions, except he be called, tried, examined,
 “and admitted thereunto, according to the form
 “hereafter following, or *has had, formerly, Episcopal*
 “*consecration or ordination.*” From hence, it is
 evident that, though the common name of Protestant
 causes many (I believe I may say the greatest part) of
 the members of the Church of England to think that
 our Church is in communion with the French reformed,
 Dutch, Prussian, and other Calvinists, and, when they
 go into foreign parts, scruple not to communicate with
 them in all offices of Religion,—even to receive the
 holy Eucharist administered by them ; yet the Church

of England, in this Preface to her Ordinal, shews it to be contrary to her doctrine that her members should act in this manner. For, in her 23rd Article, she says, "It is not lawfull for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching, or ministring the Sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men that have publick authority given unto them, in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." In the former part of this Article her doctrine plainly is, that we ought not to communicate with those who have not a lawful call to minister the word and Sacraments. And if the latter part be ambiguously expressed, it is cleared, and her meaning plainly declared, in her Preface to her Ordinal, and her practice is agreeable hereto. For she allows Roman Catholick Bishops and Priests, if they come over to her communion, to officiate in her Churches, without any other ordination than what they received in the Church of Rome. But a minister of the Lutheran or Calvinistic persuasion (amongst whom there are no Bishops), she permits not to officiate in her Church, till she has ordained them by her own form. And Heylin, in his life of Archbishop Laud (pages 305, 306), tells us that when King Charles I. granted a Brief for the poor exiled ministers of the Palatinate, in which were these words:—"Whose cases are the more to be deplored, for that this extremity is fallen upon them for their sincerity and constancy in true religion, which we together with them professed, and which we are all bound in conscience to maintain to the utmost of our powers : whereas, these religious

“and godly persons being involved amongst others
 “their countrymen might have enjoyed their estates
 “and fortunes, if, with other backsliders in the times
 “of trial, they would have submitted themselves to the
 “Antichristian yoke,”—that most reverend Prelate
 disliked this passage, “First, because the religion of
 “the Palatine Churches was declared to be the same
 “with ours; and, Secondly, because the doctrine and
 “government of the Church of Rome is called an
 “Antichristian yoke,” neither of which he could
 “approve of in the terms presented to him.” He,
 therefore, prevailed with the King to call in these
 Letters Patent, and to grant others without this
 clause; yet, this Archbishop’s controversy with Fisher
 shews he was far from being a Papist, and he died a
 Martyr for the Church of England. I will conclude
 this long epistle with part of a paragraph taken from
 that excellent book :—

“Now, as to the Romanists, I say this :—The
 “errors of the Church of Rome are grown now (many
 “of them) very old. And when errors are grown by
 “age and continuance to strength, they which speak
 “for the truth, though it be far older, are ordinarily
 “challenged for the bringers in of new opinions. And
 “there is no greater absurdity this day stirring in
 “Christendom, than that the Reformation of an old
 “corrupted Church, will we, nill we, must be taken for
 “building a new. And were not this so, we should
 “never be troubled with that idle and impertinent
 “question of theirs :—Where was your Church before
 “Luther? For it was just there, where theirs is now.—
 “One and the same Church still, no doubt of that. One
 “in substance, but not one in condition of state and
 “purity. Their part of the same Church is remaining

“ in corruption, and our part of the same under Refor-
 “ mation. The same Naaman, and he a Syrian still;
 “ but leprous with them, and cleansed with us.”

Spring-Grove, Oct. $\frac{13}{24}$, 1733.

I perceive you are not satisfied with the answer of Archbishop Laud and Bramhall and others, to that strong objection of the Church of Rome—Where was your church before Luther?—because “ you think it
 “ necessary to the essence of a Church, that is a Church
 “ strictly so, that is the Spouse of Jesus Christ, that her
 “ terms of Communion be free from sin, and that she has
 “ every thing necessary for salvation, so that the mem-
 “ bers of her communion have a right to the promises
 “ made by our Saviour to his Church, and, if we may
 “ use so bold an expression, if they live suitably to that
 “ profession, sincerely repent of their sins, and depend
 “ only on the merits of our Saviour, have a claim to
 “ salvation from God’s justice as well as his mercy.
 “ Whereas all who are out of the pale of the true
 “ Church must be left to uncovenanted mercy, and
 “ have no claim to the promises.” Therefore, to satisfy you that the argument used by those Bishops and by the Church of England is a good argument and sufficient to give us satisfaction in this case, I will consider the Jewish Church, which was often corrupted and reformed, yet was always the same Church and the Spouse of Christ, and a Church wherein salvation might always be had, from the time of God’s entering into covenant with Abraham till he finally gave her a bill of divorce when she put to death the Lord of Life. I say, the Jewish Church was the Spouse of Christ. For the Fathers, and particularly Justin Martyr in his

Dialogue with Trypho, have proved that the LORD who appeared to Abraham, Gen. xviii., and to Moses in the bush, Exod. iii., and in other places spoken of in the books of Moses, was Christ. And St. Paul intimates the same where he says, 1 Cor. x. 4, *They all drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.* And God treats the Jewish Church as his Spouse, and reproves her as a wife, charging her, when she run into idolatry and other corruptions, with whoredoms and adultery. Now though adultery be a sufficient cause for a man to put away his wife, yet if he does not put her away, she continues to be his wife, notwithstanding her continuance in her adulterous courses. He may receive her and treat her with all the affection due to a wife, though she have left him and lived years with another man, whenever she returns to him again and forsakes the adulterer. A sure argument that the marriage bond is not dissolved by her adultery. And God acted in the same manner with the Jews. When he accuses that Church of adultery, he does not speak of new espousals, as if she had ever ceased to be his wife, but only requires her to reform, and return from her evil ways, and he will receive her. As particularly Jerem. iii. 20. 22, *As a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with me, O House of Israel, saith the Lord. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* When Priests and people had all run into idolatry, and, as the Lord says in the same chapter, ver. 1, had *played the harlot with many lovers*, that is, had joined with the several nations round about in their idolatries, they had nothing to do but to reform, and all became right again. Though all the priests had been guilty of idolatry, the succession of the

priesthood was not broken or interrupted by that means ; the sacrifices of those priests who succeeded the idolaters, and derived their succession from them, when they forsook their idolatry and other corruptions, were as good and acceptable to God as the sacrifices of Aaron himself. And salvation was to be had in the Jewish Church, by virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, during the time of the greatest corruptions of that Church, by such as abstained from the idolatry and other sins which kings and priests and people had run into, as we may be satisfied from the prophets who lived in those days. For, undoubtedly, the prophets whom God sent to reprove, rebuke, and exhort that people, when that Church was most corrupt, were themselves in a state of salvation, and obtained it by virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, though they lived in that Church, and separated only from their corruptions. The case was plainly this, the Jewish Church never departed totally from the worship of the true God, and always entered their children into covenant with him by circumcision, and also pretended to worship him according to the law of Moses, though they perverted that law, and acted contrary to it in many particulars. For they kept up the worship of God in the temple, at the same time that they burnt incense to Baal and walked after other gods, Jer. viii. 2, 9. And at the same time that they run into such idolatry as provoked God to punish them in the severest manner, yet his *sanctuary* where they offered the daily sacrifice is called the *desire of their eyes*. Ezek. xxiv. 21. They did not cease to worship the LORD, and so continued still his people notwithstanding their corruptions. For God calls them *his people* at the very time he charges them with *changing their glory for that*

which does not profit, and that they have forsaken him. Jer. ii. 11, 13. Now St. Paul teaches us, 1 Cor. x. 11, that the things which happened to the Jewish Church *happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition.* Therefore we say of the Church of Rome, that as she has not apostatized from the Christian faith, but has preserved that entire in the Apostolical, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds,—as she admits members into the Church by baptism, in the form of words appointed by Christ,—as she has preserved the succession of the priesthood instituted by Christ and his Apostles, as the Jews preserved the Aaronical succession,—as she continues to offer the Holy Eucharist according to Christ's institution, (though she do not distribute it as she ought,)—and as she observes the other ordinances derived from the direction or example of the Apostles, we cannot deny her to be a Church and Spouse of Christ. But, then, as she adds the worship of departed saints to the worship of God, as the Jews join'd the worship of Baal and Ashteroth and other false gods to the worship of the Lord, she is become an adulteress. And as she has so intermingled the prayers to the Virgin Mary and other departed saints with the prayers to God in all her offices, she has made it unlawfull to join with her in any of her offices; though, if those prayers were omitted which are made to the saints, it would not be unlawfull, notwithstanding her corruptions. Because we might then keep in her communion without partaking in her corruptions. But by making her errors a part of her worship in all offices, she makes it unlawfull to join in worship with her. The Church of England therefore, using the power which she had as an independent National Church, reformed her own offices, casting everything out of them which was not agreeable



to the doctrine of the Gospel. Therein doing no more than the Church of Rome, at least that part which is called the Gallican Church, cannot but allow she had just authority to do, as we may see in Père Courayer's Vindication of the English Ordinations, chap. x. And, as the spiritual adultery of the Jewish Church did not interrupt or break the legal succession of the Aaronical priesthood, consequently the succession of our priesthood, though derived from the Church of Rome, is a true and valid succession. But you say, *a separation there certainly is*. Very true: we have separated from the errors of the Church of Rome, that is all the separation I know of. For, as I observed in my former letter, the Church of England declares, in her 30th canon, "that she only departed from the Churches "in communion with the Church of Rome *in those particular points wherein they have fallen*, both from "themselves in their ancient integrity, and from the "Apostolical Churches which were their first founders." You add, "nor would any bishop or priest of the "Church of England receive the Sacrament from a "Romish priest, or administer it to a Roman Catholick "while he continued such." But I think I gave a direct answer to this in my first letter on this subject, where I said that, "though I would not join in any "religious worship with a Roman priest here in England, "where they act in opposition to the Established "Church, and thereby make their worship (were it "otherwise inoffensive) schismatical, yet if I was at "Rome or in any other country of that communion, I "should make no scruple of conscience to join with "them even at the altar, if their form of worship "obliged me not to partake in their errors." By which I meant not that they should renounce their

errors, but only that when I communicated with them, they should omit such parts of the office as I could not join with. And I questioned whether any Divine of the Church of England (who had considered the point) would say otherwise. For the errors of the Church, or of those who administer the Sacraments, would not affect me, if I did not partake in them. And, as to giving the communion to a Papist, while he continued such, I answered, that our laws required them to come to Church and to the Sacrament, but did not require them to renounce Transubstantiation, or the other errors of Popery, except they took a place. And this I conceive is as much as the charity recommended in Scripture requires of us. I conceive the Jansenists go too far, who, rather than not communicate with the Church of Rome, will communicate in all those errors which they deplore and wish reformed, nay, will profess their belief of them as essentials of Christianity. For they must now profess those errors which they deplore: and to wish and endeavour a reformation of them, and at the same time make profession of them and teach them as articles of faith, is a mystery I cannot understand. Neither can I conceive how the highest degree of charity can oblige any to act in this manner. No charity can oblige me to break one of God's commandments. And when the Scripture so positively says, Matt. iv. 10, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*; no charity can oblige me to worship either Saint or Angel, as I must do if I communicate in any religious worship with a Romish Priest, when he uses a Roman office.

*From the REV. NICHOLAS BRETT, son of DR. BRETT, to
a friend, accompanying the foregoing letters.*

Dear Sir,

These are the letters I promised you some time ago; they will confirm you, I am sure, in your notions of universal charity: you will find they were wrote on quite another occasion; I might have abridged them, and have taken out only those passages that related to our conversation together the other morning, but I was afraid an abridgement might have weakened the force of them. They are wrote with that clearness and moderation that I think it impossible for anybody to be displeased with them; and, I fancy, I may venture to say that you will have a greater veneration than ever for the Church of England, as you see it proved, I think beyond contradiction, that she always professed, both in her doctrine and practice, an universal love towards the whole Church of Christ, and that she never separated from any Church, but only made use of her power, as an independent National Church to separate from errors. She does not censure other Churches, nor thrust them out of the Communion of the Catholick Church, but provides for her own members, advises others, as brethren, and so leaves them to stand or fall to their own Master. You may perhaps wonder how the author came to fall so hard on the Dissenters, especially at a time when he was endeavouring to show the wonderfull charity of the Church of England above that of Rome; besides, 'tis observable, that, throughout the famous controversy in King James the Second's time with the Papists, no one that appeared in it ever

cast out the least reflection on any Dissenter. To this I answer, that the author was obliged to it by the nature of his dispute ; the objector took his arguments from the Bishop of Senes's Pastoral Letter, which is chiefly levelled against the Calvinists, who have no Episcopal Ordinations, no more than our Presbyterians ; and, in order to show that though the Bishop's arguments held good against Presbyterians, yet they did not with respect to the Church of England, 'twas necessary to show that our Church was founded on a quite different building,

I am yours, &c.,

NIC : BRETT.

DR. BRETT to the REV. MR. SMITH.

Dear Sir,

I received y^e papers w^{ch} you sent by Mr. Jebb, and have looked them over, and do approve of them in general. But must, however, beg leave to except against a few particulars.

I am entirely of your mind that y^e shorter or fewer alterations from y^e old order, y^e better, because they will be y^e less shocking. Therefore, in y^e first place, I desire that y^e priest may still be directed to stand at y^e *north side* of y^e table, and not at y^e place w^{ch} we at this time call *before y^e table*, that is y^e *west side*, with his back to y^e people. For I conceive such a position of y^e priest will be very shocking to them, who by this means will not only be hind'red from seeing what y^e priest does when he consecrates, (w^{ch}, whilst I was in y^e public communion, I observed y^e people to be very fond of seeing,) but they also cannot so much as hear, (if y^e congregation be any thing large,) y^e prayers either in y^e sacrificial or sacramental part of y^e office. And they will say that y^e prayers may as well be in an unknown tongue, as to have them uttered in such a manner as not to be heard by y^e people. For *St. Paul's* reasoning holds in this case,—*how shall he say Amen at thy Eucharist, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest*. And I have observed that in y^e Liturgies published lately by *Renaudotius*, particularly in y^e Liturgy of *St. Basil*, (p. 15,) y^e people said *Amen* to every part of y^e sacrificial action. Which shews that all was performed in their sight and hearing. Which could not be if y^e priest had stood betwixt them and y^e Altar, with his back towards them. I know it is said that y^e practice of y^e Church till y^e Reformation has always been for

y^e priest to stand *before* y^e Altar, with his back to y^e people. And that it has been so in y^e *Western* Church for y^e later ages, I do not deny, but am not satisfied that it was always so, or that it is so at this time in y^e *Eastern* Churches. For *Beveridge*, in his notes on y^e 11th *Nicene* canon (where he gives us the ichnography of y^e ancient Churches, p. 76, vol. 2.), proves that y^e Bishop or Priest coming out of y^e Diaconicon or Vestry, w^{ch} stood on y^e *north side* of y^e Altar, went directly from thence to y^e Altar, to y^e *north side* of it. And in his note on y^e 59th apostolical canon, (p. 31, col. 2,) quotes a passage from *Goar's Euchologion*, w^{ch} shews that y^e assisting Priest stood on y^e left hand, or south side, of y^e Altar. Indeed, there are several Rubricks in y^e Liturgies published by *Renaudotius*, w^{ch} speak of y^e Priest as standing *coram Altari*. But as their Altars stood in y^e midst of y^e chancel, and had four equal sides, he that stood at any of them might be said to stand *before* y^e Altar. And to him that came out of y^e vestry w^{ch} stood at y^e north side of y^e chancel, y^e north part of y^e Altar was directly before him, and, therefore, he might most properly be said to stand before y^e Altar when he stood on y^e *north side*. But what I think sets y^e matter beyond all dispute is a Rubrick in y^e common *Syriack* Liturgy, published by *Renaudotius*, (vol. 2, p. 24,) where, as soon as y^e Priest has eaten and drank of y^e consecrated elements himself, he takes up y^e paten and cup, *venitque a latere septentrionali ad australe*: which is a clear evidence that he stood on the *north side* when he received, and consequently when he consecrated y^e elements and performed y^e other parts of y^e office. Therefore, since y^e *north side* was, and I suppose still is, y^e side on w^{ch} y^e Priest is appointed to stand in y^e *Eastern* Church, and, therefore, I believe, was so in y^e ancient Church, I can see

no reason why we should alter y^e Rubrick in this case. And forasmuch as the Priest's standing to consecrate with his back to y^e people must hinder them, not only from seeing what he does, but from hearing those prayers to w^{ch} they are to say *Amen*, w^{ch} is directly contrary to what *St. Paul* has taught, I can by no means consent that y^e Priest should in y^e Communion Service turn his back to y^e people. Neither do I think it decent, that when y^e Rubrick directs him to turn to y^e people, he should turn his back to y^e Altar; especially when y^e tremendous gifts ly there. For these reasons I must desire that y^e Priest be ordered to stand on y^e *north side* of y^e Altar, as is appointed in y^e Publick Liturgy.

The Introite, as I take it, is designed, not as a part of y^e Communion Service, but as a proper employment for y^e people between y^e end of y^e Liturgy or Morning Prayer, and y^e beginning of y^e Communion Service, to be said or chanted whilst y^e Priest goes from y^e desk to y^e vestry, to put on y^e habit proper for y^e communion, (which you know ought to be different from that he reads y^e prayers in,) and from thence proceeds to y^e Altar. I would therefore have no other Rubrick concerning it but this :—

Then shall be said or sung y^e Introite, a Psalm appointed for y^e day.

In y^e Liturgies published by *Renaudotius*, I find that y^e Lord's Prayer is joined to y^e prayer made to y^e breaking of y^e bread. And in y^e *Roman* missal, it also makes a part of y^e canon, and follows y^e oblation for y^e state of Christ's Church. And you know Pope *Gregory* supposed that y^e Apostles used only y^e Lord's Prayer and y^e words of institution in their consecrations. Now, though I am not of *Gregory's* mind, but do believe that they both blessed and offered

y^e symbols ; yet I suppose *Gregory* and those that have followed him, could not have fallen into this notion if y^e Lord's Prayer in *Gregory's* time, and long before, had not been thought to have been a part in y^e consecration. I therefore submit it to your consideration, whether it would not be proper to omit y^e Lord's Prayer in y^e beginning of y^e Communion Service, and use it after y^e prayer or oblation for y^e state of Christ's Church : or whether it be more proper to let it stand here as it does and omit it in y^e post-communion. For sure it is very requisite we should use it in that part of y^e office w^{ch} we may properly call y^e *canon*. Those words, *give us this day our daily bread*, may certainly be properly applied to y^e Eucharistical elements. I shall only observe to you further, that *Mr. Haws* and *Mr. Bell*, in their letters to me, have both taken notice of this passage in *Pope Gregory*, and others.

I could wish, also, that both y^e Confession and Absolution may stand in y^e place where they stand in y^e publick Liturgy. Not only because it will make a less alteration in y^e service, but because I think it requisite that y^e Priest should confess and beg pardon for his own sins and y^e sins of y^e people, before he presumes to offer y^e tremendous mysteries.

I think, also, that y^e prayer, *O Lord and Heavenly Father, we entirely desire*, &c., should not be omitted, for y^e sake of that part of it where *we present our souls and bodies*, &c.

Forasmuch as y^e bread and wine were anciently taken out of y^e offerings of y^e people, I think it proper that in y^e last Rubrick this clause should be added,

The Priest shall take so much out of it, as shall defray y^e charge of y^e bread and wine, and y^e remainder, &c.

I have no objection to any thing contained in y^e other offices, except y^e Form of Absolution in y^e office for Visiting y^e Sick, w^{ch} is certainly modern, being not older than y^e 12th or 13th century, and, therefore, not proper to be used by us, who pretend to reform according to primitive antiquity. I would, therefore, much rather, if you approve of it, have y^e Form altered for that Form in y^e order of y^e Communion, as set forth in y^e year 1547, and published in *Sparrow's Collections*, page 23.

“ Our blessed Lord, who hath left power to his Church to absolve penitent sinners from their sins, and to restore to y^e grace of y^e Heavenly Father such as truly believe in Christ, have mercy upon you, &c.” as in our Communion office.

Or, if this be not liked, I desire that a liberty may be left to y^e Priest, either to use y^e indicative Form now in y^e publick office for y^e Visitation of y^e Sick, or that in y^e Communion office ; according to his discretion. For I am very unwilling to be tied down to such a modern Form.

These, dear Sir, are all y^e exceptions I have against y^e papers you sent me, or any part of them ; and if corrections be made according to what I have written, I very readily give my assent to them.

I am,

Yo^r affectionate Brother,

and most humble Servant,

Spring-Grove,
Feb. 12, 1717.

THO. BRETT.

My wife joins in services to you and your Lady.

These to Mr. Smith
psent.

